1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

593 wives and thus lead to frequent divorce. In such circumstances a close intimate relationship between husband and wife is a victory of personality over social and cultural conditions in the society.

Other Family Relations and the Behavior Norms

593 602 571 829 867 To the Kanuri themselves, family relations—those between parents and children, between siblings, uncles and nephews, grandparents and grandchild, between one in-law and another and so on—are part of a larger framework of behavior governing almost all the important relations between persons and groups in the society. The Kanuri believe that these relations originate in the family where the person first learns them and are then extended outwards to include all of the important social relations of adult life. From the anthropologist's point of view it is impossible to say which comes first. Do the family relations create or cause those social relations which best suit them, or does the society outside the family create the kind of family relations required by the society at large? Whatever the answer, the Kanuri are quite clear on this point. They believe that the rules governing social relations in the family and household are the essential guides to the successful operation of the larger scaled organizations in the economic and political life of their society. Thus many social relations in Bornu have a kin-like quality or are spoken of using the idiom of kinship, even though the persons involved clearly recognize that they have no kinship with one another through genealogical, descent group, or affinal relations.

593 571 579 The most important of these relations is the *bərzum* or discipline-respect relationship closely modelled on, and usually spoken of in terms of, the father-son relationship. In this relationship a father gives his son protection, security, food and shelter, a place or status in the community, an occupation, helps him to arrange a marriage, and represents him in the adjudication of disputes. In his turn the son must be completely loyal, obedient and subserviant to his father, and work for him in whatever way the father feels is necessary. This respect is so demanding a mode of behavior in families that young children are sometimes sent away to a relative's household, usually to a grandparent, and return as one infomant put it, "when they understand respect." When the father dies, an older brother or a paternal uncle may take the place of the father as head of the household. He then receives the same respect from the dead man's children. This is so because they are older men with authority in the household. Thus all senior relatives, older siblings, and paternal uncles receive respect, and although it may not have the intense quality of the father-son relationship to begin with, everybody knows they may have to treat such a person as if he were a father under certain circumstances. Besides this, a young child is taught that in general older people are to be respected, no matter what their sex or degree of relationship to oneself. Other persons in society are indicated as being "like your father" or "greater than your father" in the amount of discipline and respect that they require. Religious specialists, political leaders, and any compound head with whom a person is staying are all in this category. In other words, the father-son behavior norm is the model used by the people themselves to describe the nature of all authority relations in the society.

[861] [602] [867] [561]

1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

Daughters are taught in the same way, but they must give great heed to their mothers who are, in a day-to-day sense, the authority figures in their lives. Although men will respond to questions by saying they have similar discipline and respect for both their father and mother, there is in addition an emotional quality to the mother-son relationship almost wholly lacking in that between the father and his children. For many Kanuri men this is leavened by the high divorce rate that separates them from a continual long-term association with their mothers. But for those who have had consistent long-term associations with their mothers this can be the strongest emotional relationship of an entire lifetime. Thus one young man resigned from a salaried job suddenly one day because, as he said, "I wanted to see my mother and felt she was too far away."

Discipline-respect relationships are qualified by another mode of behavior called *nungu*, or shame-avoidance. This means that the persons in the relationship, especially the junior, must be subdued, self-controlled and constantly be restricted in his behavior to very limited traditional patterns. In the extreme, people who have *nungu* relationships would not eat together from the same bowl, as friends do, and only the most necessary conversation passes between them, while the junior keeps his eyes lowered and is in no way informal. This is best seen when a very friendly person is suddenly confronted with, or is observed with, his own father. His jocularity suddenly disappears; he becomes extremely serious and humble, and never speaks until spoken to unless he has a particular message he has been commissioned to bring. Even then he will wait until asked to state the meassage.

Within the kinship system the epitomy of the *nungu* relationship is that of father and son, but other senior men like father's and mother's brothers as well as older brothers may all have some shame-avoidance in their relationship to a young nephew or brother. Such shame-avoidance increases when the age differences are greater, when the wealth and power of the senior is great, and most particularly if the senior has either taken the place of a dead father, or a young man has been sent to live with his senior male relative so that the older brother or uncle is now his compound head. When there are sex differences as well, then *nungu* is less intense within the descent group but more intense with affines to whom it applies. Thus a Kanuri man will tell his mother things he cannot speak of to his father, and generally he can speak more easily to his mother's and his father's sisters than he can to his uncles. However the most abject avoidance is maintained between in-laws of the opposite sex. Such persons would never allow themselves to be alone together; they avoid each other on a path (the woman steps out of the way with eyes downcast), and they would never speak to one another directly. Because Kanuri girls go to live with their husbands, often close to or in the households of their husband's family, then the burden of such avoidances falls on the bride. Only when the wife and husband move to a household of their own at some remove from that of his parents can the intense avoidance and tension generated by strict *nungu* rules between the young girl and her father-in-law be alleviated.

In the wider society there are *nungu* relations as well. Generally speaking, the greater the discipline-respect, the more likely it is to be associated with *nungu* or shame-avoidance. Thus the relationship between a man and his direct superior in a political or economic organization has many elements of *nungu* connected with it. He rarely speaks directly to his superior, they do not have long conversations, he

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dug in the sandy soil between the ankles and the infant then has a simple and comforting toilet ready made for it by the mother. Afterwards its loins are washed and the hole covered up with sand. During the entire infant stage breast-feeding is carried on easily and simply upon demand by the infant for the breast. Indeed the breast is generally used as a pacifier.

A typical scene in a mother's hut illustrates the way in which the introduction of a new baby to society is carried out. The mother and her friends sit around chatting and they pass the baby around, dandling it in turn, although the baby remains with the mother for a large part of the time. A very common topic of conversation at such times is, quite unsurprisingly, the new baby. But unlike a similar group of American ladies most of the talk is *to* and not *about* the baby. The mother and many of those present tell the uncomprehending infant in sing-song voices about its kindred, "So-and-so is your father, so-and-so is your brother, so-and-so is your sister," and so on through a vast complex of kinship links on both the mother's and the father's side of the family. The infant is also told in the same way about its neighborhood, its section of the town, or its village, its political leaders, and so on. "So-and-so is your village head, so-and-so is your district head, and this is your tribe and this is your emirate, and this is your *Shehu*, and so-and-so is your Waziri." The family occupation is also mentioned and how soon the infant is going to help in such-and-such activities around the compound and grow up into successful adulthood within the framework of all the associations and expectations that are referred to constantly.

Why tell a baby about its social connections, occupational expectations, political affiliations, and so on? Certainly later on, when it can understand a little more of the language, such talk is a means of initiating it into the social groupings of the society. However at this stage another function is performed. The child is a new member of the society, and it is being introduced into and given a recognizable place in its social setting. The new member means new relationships. So-and-so who did not have a younger brother's son, now has one; someone else now has a new cousin and perhaps a future spouse; or someone else now has a sister's son or an additional one. The coming of the *tiful* or infant creates changes because a new member has been added and in introducing it to society people are asked to shift their understanding of the organizations which now must include this new member. By constantly referring to these new relationships during the infant's first few months people close to the family affirm to themselves and finally to others the fact that many relationships are different now that the new baby has arrived safely.

As far as training goes, the *tiful* is too young to be very harshly dealt with or to be told not to do this or that. Its primary task is to survive and grow into a useful, law-abiding, member of its community.

Childhood

Infancy ends as weaning begins, about the end of the eighteenth month although a good deal of variation exists in actual practice so that many are weaned earlier. In general weaning is carried out with a matter-of-fact attitude as if to say,

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862 "This is just a common, everyday matter," and should not be thought of as giving anyone any trouble. When difficulties do arise an older woman of the compound or the family offers her breast as a pacifier. In the odd case where this does not succeed pressures tighten up. The breast is referred to as "dirty" or specifically as "excreta" and in extreme instances bitter grounds of leaves are put on the breast and the lesson is very quickly learned.

861 863 858 516 826 After weaning, pressures are slowly brought to bear to teach the child proper ways of living among its people. Thus, as soon as a child can totter, the adult woman in whose hut he is sleeping starts to enforce the rule that he or she should go outside to perform toilet functions, stoop over with knees bent and buttocks near the ground using only the left hand for any attentions necessary to elimination. Later on as language skills develop the importance of the left hand is more highly emphasized as well as the advisability of being discreet about toilet functions. After the age of two and a half or three, scolding gets more intense and the child is told it is dirty or bad for urinating on the floor. Naturally the severity of the training depends to a large extent as well on the particular situation, the mood and personality of the mother, or other socializing agents present, as well as the age of the child. Thus a grandmother was observed who was not overly excited when her two-year-old grandson urinated on the floor, but she became quite angry when he wet her bed.

861 Patient but continuous teaching by adults in the household is a constant part of everyday activities for the young child. The following excerpt from field notes tells its own story:

> A plate of food is on the floor of the hut gathering flies. The grandmother says to her little grandson, "Kachella, pick up the plate. Now, take it over there. Be careful, there is food on the plate. Now, take that other plate and cover the food over. (Plates are made of grass.) That's right, very good." This simple operation which would have taken the grandmother a few seconds has been carried out after two patient minutes of instruction to the child who could not yet speak more than a few words.

867 868 Childhood also ushers in the establishment of sex roles. Boys are now called "small boys" and girls are "small girls" or "three heads" referring to the three-pronged hair style of prepubescent girls. Boys and girls wear different clothing and begin fairly soon to associate with members of their own sex and to carry out chores that are specifically for boys or for girls. In play groups based on sex they wander freely about the village or neighborhood of the city gathering like flies to honey at the slightest hint of any excitement, and wandering further afield from their own compound as they get older. The girl comes quickly under the authority of the women of the household especially her own mother if she is brought up at home. She learns the intricacies of preparing food, carrying water, and the ever-present task of grinding millet either at a quern or by pounding it on a large wooden mortar. The boys begin to gather firewood, help with the farming, run messages, gather grass for a horse if there is one, tend the goats and sheep of the compound, and learn the family dry-season occupation. Pressure to learn these skills is slow but definite. Punishments are rare, but severe. The child is beaten with a rod or whip until neighbors and friends succeed in persuading the parents to cease or desist. Reasons given for the beating often concern the sudden, or con-

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tinual dereliction of some duty although outright malfeasance such as stealing can also bring swift and awesome retribution. For example, a young boy was beaten for continually omitting to gather grass for his father's horse. This is a skill that a boy should acquire by the age of six or eight, possibly nine at the very latest. When punishment occurs its severity is noted by all children within earshot, and thus the beating of one child of the village or ward serves notice on all that punishment is not just a matter of threats but may become a reality if limits are transgressed.

That such household learning soon becomes habitual can be seen any day in a Bornu village by watching children. Even a little girl of three and a half can accomplish tasks involving quite a lot of dexterity. One little girl of this age was passed a straw mat plate and separately given some paper clips. She neatly put the paper clips on the plate and began her own already advanced imitation of the quick, deft, jiggling movements associated with the sifting of ground-nut shells. None of her paper clips was dropped, and she soon passed the plate back saying, "Here are some sifted ground nuts."

Sometimes play takes in both sexes and is more complex than simple imitation like the one above. Thus for several days a large group of young children from the age of five through ten may organize a "wedding." The "bride" and "groom" are chosen as are the various kindred, the best man, the leading woman, etc. Care is taken to practice as many of the details of the adult virgin wedding ceremony as they can manage including even a mock impregnation, in this case with a small doll. Wedding foods in miniature are passed around to the adults who accept the mock food with a show of seriousness although they may comment on or question some detail of the ceremony carried out mistakenly or omitted by the children. Adults expressed satisfaction with this type of play and remarked on its instructive value for the children. Such play is related to an even more complex form called *mai-mai*, which is no longer practiced in Bornu. In playing *mai-mai* the young children in a village put on a pageant. They chose a king, nobles, servants, slaves, wives, gave titles to everyone, and behaved for several days in the guise of these socio-political roles. Mock battles were fought, slaves taken and justice meted out in a mock court. Seniority was established by age and consent. The organization was temporary like the "wedding" and disbanded after a few days. During periods when adults are out of the compound, away at a market, or working in the fields during the growing season, children often play house. The group gets together and appoints "fathers," "wives," and "children." The little children may actually cook for their "husbands" on such occasions and the couples go into a hut in the compound where sexual play is carried on. They are, however, soon called back to the larger group where it has been declared "morning" by another child who has announced the "morning prayers" signifying that night has passed. Boys are aware that such play should stop when they can ejaculate. From then on they are men; sex is a serious affair and unmarried girls are illegitimate objects of sexual intercourse. However such prepubescent sex derived from playing "house" is widespread, or to paraphrase one young informant, "Everyone does such things when they are young."

Boys especially, but girls as well, may also begin some religious instruction during their childhood. Although girls never leave home for this purpose, boys sometimes do after the age of six or seven. In some cases the teacher lives nearby

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571 uity into his own generation of one link or agent of his parents' relational network in the society.

861 After weaning (and perhaps adoption) the steady, inexorable process of socialization training begins to be applied to the child.

863 Toilet training is geared to the acquisition of walking skills. As soon as the child is able to toddle on its feet the adult woman in whose hut it lives starts enforcing the rule that the child should go outside of the hut, stoop on the ground and use only the left hand for any function having to do with toilet activities. Failure to learn these skills is met with more insistent pressure as time goes on. A young child only recently weaned who cannot accomplish facile toilet functions may not even be scolded. However, with increased age and language skill, admonitions soon begin and are given with increasing frequency; the child is told that it is dirty, bad, and that it must not do such things as urinate on the hut floor. The severity depends upon the particular situation, the age of the child, and the mood and personality of the mother, grandmother, or other socializing agent who may be quite calm on some occasions and rather angry on others. The following excerpt from notes taken by the writer's wife describe a socialization situation:

> If Kachella gana (aged two) visiting my house makes a puddle on the cement floor, his grandmother will ask for a tin of water to pour on the floor and to wash the child, and this will be done either with no comment at all or, "Oh Kachella, look what you have done." On such occasions Kachella does not show much discomfort. But if the child is sleeping on his grandmother's bed and wakes up wet, he may hear, "Get up! get up! You dirty little boy" and so on for four or five minutes. During such an outburst Kachella is liable to be sitting on the floor howling piteously, which gives rise to increased consequences. Another child is told to bring a soft corn stock, which granny waves menacingly as she cautions Kachella to "Stop! Stop! Stop!" and having achieved the desired effect, puts down the corn stock beside her as a warning. We have never seen anyone hit a small child, but

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861 We have never seen anyone hit a small child, but 158.

> the warnings are frequent. The "boogy-man" threat is more often used as a warning. For example, last month a group of travelling entertainers brought a very large, ugly hyena to town ... apparently Kachella gana was shown the thing from a distance, and ever since the hyena has been used as a deterrent to investigating the contents of medicine bottles, or venturing beyond the compound door. It works, although Kachella is inclined to laugh somewhat incredulously. (1)

Continuing with the same excerpt, it will be noticed that positive as well as negative learning is begun early and definite, patient teaching by socializing adults is a normal part of every day's activities for the young child:

> A plate of food is on the floor of the hut gathering flies. The grandmother says to her little adoptive grandson, "Kachella, pick the plate up. Now take it over there. Be careful, there is food on the plate. Now take that other plate and cover the food over (plates are made of grass). That's right, very good." The operation which would have taken the grandmother a second has been carried out only after two minutes of patient instruction to the child who could not yet speak more than a few words.

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The inception of sex roles begins with the onset of child-

302 hood and the end of weaning. The boys are tada gana (small boys) and

[858] wear the appropriate small smock and begin to have their heads shaved

[602] in the child hair style of the father's agnatic group. This small boy's hair style often depicts the political affiliations of the father's agnatic group and/or its territorial origins. Thus all the household groups connected to a political leader or coming from a particular

[184] town may share the same small boy's hair style. Some lower class informants in the large urban centre stated that they used whatever hair style they pleased for their small boys when it was observed that no rule seemed to be followed.

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302 After weaning, the girls are fero gana (small virgin girls)

(1) Excerpt from correspondence by Diana Cohen with the Institute of Child Study at the University of Toronto (1956).